

## **“WHAT WAS THE QUESTION?”**

A Twelve-Step Study Guided by the Questions in Alcoholics Anonymous.

October 2 through December 25, 2023

Facilitator: Bill H., St. Louis, Mo.

(All page numbers from Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, unless otherwise noted)

The first question that appears in Alcoholics Anonymous is on the second page of the Table of Contents. The question is “*Who am I to say there is no God?*” p. vi

The second and third questions in the book are also in the Table of Contents:

“*This drinker finally found the answer to her nagging question, Why?*” p. vii

“*Me an Alcoholic?*” p. viii

Were these first three questions in the book part of some “Grand Plan” to get our attention? Is it an accident that the first questions in the book should be about “*God*”, “*Why*” and then “*Alcoholic*”? Are these questions attractive or offensive to new readers of the book?

Is God using questions in our book to “constantly disclose more to you and to us”?

In this Big Book Twelve Step study, we discover every question raised in the book is answered in the book. We find the questions and answers *guide us from what our life is like living in our illness to what our life is like living in the solution of our spiritual awakening.*

Questions appear on pp. xviii-xix, “FOREWARD TO SECOND EDITION”:

“Could these large numbers of erstwhile erratic alcoholics successfully meet and work together? Would there be quarrels over membership, leadership, and money? Would there be strivings for power and prestige? Would there be schisms that would split A.A. apart?”

Our Twelve Traditions, adopted at the first AA International Convention in Cleveland in 1950, answer these questions. We will return to these questions later in this study.

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**Step Four.** “**Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**” (p. 59)

The Step One information in the Big Book discloses to me that I am *powerless* over alcohol. My life remains *unmanageable*, and miserable, if I keep living in the *illusion* that I can control my drinking and with the *delusion* that I’m not powerless over alcohol.

The Step Two information in the Big Book discloses to me that my only hope for help with my illness of alcoholism is to *learn how to live my life on a spiritual basis*.

With my Step Three prayer, I *decide to learn how to seek spiritual help* for my life.

Now, in Step Four, I continue the *spiritual growth process* I began in Step Three:

“Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning ... our decision [Step 3] was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our liquor was but a symptom.” (pp. 63-64)

“... victim of the delusion ... satisfaction and happiness ... manages well?” (p. 61)

“Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles.” (p. 62)

“First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure.” (p. 64)

“... but he failed to enlarge his spiritual life.” (p. 35)

“... self ... had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.” (p. 64)

“Resentment is the ‘number one’ offender. It destroys more alcoholics ...” (p. 64)

“Fear ... was an evil and corroding thread ...” (p. 67)

“Now about sex. Many of us needed an overhauling there.” (p. 68)

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**Step Four.** “Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” (p. 59)

“Wasn’t it because self-reliance failed us?” (p. 68)

*To be “searching” is to make an honest list of all our resentments, fears and selfish (inconsiderate) sexual conduct. To be “fearless” is to use the prayers as part of each inventory.*

In the Big Book, *Step Four is a **praying** step, not merely a “making a list” step!*

“Though our decision [Step 3] was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our liquor was but a symptom.” (p. 64)

**A Step Four Question:** Why is such urgency expressed by stressing “at once”?

I came to AA thinking drinking was my problem.

Steps One, Two and Three disclose that liquor was but a symptom of my real problem:

“Selfishness—self-centeredness ... self-will run riot, though he usually doesn’t think so.” (p. 62)

So I ask God in my Step Three prayer to “relieve me of the bondage of self”. (p. 63)

My “self” cannot gain relief from its “bondage of self” without spiritual help from a Power greater than my “self”. *My Step Three prayer for spiritual help has no real effect until I learn to pray to the God of my understanding for help with my resentments, fears and selfishness.*

I begin this prayer action “at once” in Step Four *to learn how to seek God’s care, to learn how to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand God.*

**I enlarge my spiritual life and grow my relationship with God as I understand God when I pray and ask God for help ... even before I receive the help of God’s care!!**

**I will continue this “learning to seek God’s care” process through all Twelve Steps.**

**Resentment.** (“... the ‘number one’ offender. It destroys more alcoholics ...”, p. 64))

“We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry.” (Col. 1) (p. 64)

“We asked ourselves why we were angry?”

“... our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships (including sex) were hurt or threatened.” (Col. 2) (pp. 64-65)

“Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, our personal or sex relations, which had been interfered with?” (Col. 3) (p. 65)

“For when harboring such feelings we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit. The insanity of alcohol returns ... we ... die.” (p. 66)

“We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us.”

“How could we escape?” (p. 66)

“We saw that these resentments must be mastered, but how?”

**Pray.** “We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience we would grant a sick friend.” (p. 67)

“When a person offended, we said ... How can I be helpful to him?” (p. 67)

**Pray.** “God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.”

**Pray.** “... God will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one.”

“Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking ... frightened ... to blame?”

“When we saw our faults we listed them ...” (Col. 4)

“We admitted our wrongs honestly ... willing to set these matters straight.”

*My Resentment Inventory begins to free me from the “bondage of self” of my **past**.*

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**“Wasn’t it because self-reliance failed us?”** (p. 68)

*To be “searching” is to make an honest list of all our resentments, fears and selfish (inconsiderate) sexual conduct. To be “fearless” is to use the prayers as part of each inventory. Step Four is a praying step, not merely a “making a list” step!*

**Fear.** (“... was an evil and corroding thread ...”, p. 67)

“It set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune we felt we didn’t deserve.” (p. 67)

“But did not we, ourselves, set the ball rolling?” (p. 67)

“We put [our fears] on paper ...” (Col. 1) (p. 68)

“We asked ourselves why we had [fears]?” (Col. 2) “

“Wasn’t it because self-reliance failed us?” (Col. 3) “

“For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves.” (p. 68)

**Pray.** “... we let [God] demonstrate, through us, what [God] can do.” (p. 68)

**Pray.** “We ask [God] to remove our fear ...” “

**Pray.** “... and direct our attention to what [God] would have us be.” “

*My Fear Inventory begins to free me from the “bondage of self” of my uncertain future.*

**Sex (Inconsideration).** (“Many of us needed an overhauling there.”, p. 68)

“We all have sex problems. We’d hardly be human if we didn’t.” (p. 69)

“What can we do about them?” (p. 69)

“Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate?” (Col. 2) (p. 69)

“Whom had we hurt?” (Col. 1) “

“Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness?” “

“Where were we at fault ...?” (Col. 3) “

“... what should we have done instead?” (Col. 4) “

“We subjected each relation to this test—was it selfish or not?” (Col. 5) (p. 69)

**Pray.** “We asked God to mold our ideals ...” “

**Pray.** “... and help us to live up to them.” “

**Pray.** “In meditation, we asked God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it.” “

**Pray.** “... we let God be the final judge.” (p. 70)

“Suppose we fall short of the chosen ideal and stumble?” (p. 70)

“Does this mean we are going to get drunk?” “

**Pray.** “... have the honest desire to let God take us to better things ...” “

*My Sexual Conduct inventory begins to free me from “the bondage of self” in my present.*

**Next Time: Step Five, “Having made our personal inventory, what shall we do about it?”**